



*Fact Sheet*

# Conservation Reserve Program

## Pennsylvania Enhancement Program

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USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the State of Pennsylvania have agreed on a plan to implement a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay.

This voluntary program encourages farmers to enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 10 to 15 years duration to remove lands from agricultural production. CRP is a CCC program implemented through the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

### **Goals**

The Pennsylvania CREP was developed to help protect the Chesapeake Bay from the effects of excessive nutrient and sediment loading due to agricultural runoff. The State of Pennsylvania, as part of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement, is working to reduce sediment loading by 1.6 million tons and nitrogen and phosphorus loading by 2 million pounds per year.

### **What Area Does It Cover?**

The program is targeted to 20 counties in South Central Pennsylvania that drain into the Susquehanna and Potomac Rivers which are the primary tributaries to the Chesapeake Bay.

### **Benefits of the Program**

This program is expected to have significant water quality and wildlife habitat benefits. When fully implemented, this CREP is expected to substantially reduce the nitrogen and sediment deposition due to agricultural activities to the Chesapeake Bay watershed as well as protect other nutrient sensitive waterways in Pennsylvania.

### **What Kind of Conservation Practices are Eligible?**

Eligible CRP practices are:

- CP1 (Tame Grass) - Highly Erodible Land Only;
- CP2- (Native Grass) - Highly Erodible Land Only;
- CP 3A (Hardwood Tree Planting) - Highly Erodible Land Only;
- CP4D - Wildlife Habitat - Highly Erodible Land Only;
- CP8A - Grassed Waterway;
- CP9 - Shallow Water Area;
- CP12 - Wildlife Food Plots;

- CP15A - Contour Grass Strips;
- CP 21 (Filter Strip);
- CP 22 (Riparian Buffer);
- CP 23 (Wetland Restoration).

### **What are the Eligibility Requirements?**

CREP applications must satisfy the basic eligibility criteria for the CRP.

Participants must agree to establish and maintain eligible practices under a 10 to 15 year contract.

Land must have been cropped 2 of the previous 5 years and be physically and legally capable of being cropped. Marginal pastureland is also eligible provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to trees.

Producers may also offer eligible acreage for general or continuous CRP signup.

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### **Payments Under CREP**

The annual rental payment is based on the soil rental rate as calculated by FSA. It includes an incentive payment above the annual per acre rental rate based on the conservation practice installed. Incentive rates will be 100 percent for filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration, contour grass strips, grassed waterways and shallow water areas. For land enrolled to stabilize highly erodible land the incentive rate is 75 percent.

The Federal Government will pay up to 50 percent of the cost of installing conservation practices (installing new vegetation, fencing, etc.). For producers who enroll solely in a 15-year CREP contract, the State will pay up to 50 percent of the remaining cost. Participants will receive an additional \$5 per acre rental amount from FSA, to generally reflect the maintenance burdens of CRP contracts on producers.

### **How Much Will it Cost?**

For an enrollment of 100,000 acres, the expected financial Federal and State obligation will be approximately \$210 million over 15 years, with \$129 million coming from the Federal Government, and \$77 million coming from the State.

The State share is approximately 33 percent of the total program costs and the Federal share is approximately 67 percent.

### **Can I Still Enroll in General CRP and Continuous Sign-up CRP?**

Yes, CREP is just another option that a farmer may select to enhance their land; an applicant may still enroll in general CRP or continuous sign-up CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous sign-up. Under CREP, applicants have flexibility to extend the duration of their conservation contract and thus increase the sum total of rental payments. Also, the enrollment process is on a continuous basis and payments are at a higher rate.

### **Haying and Grazing**

Haying and grazing is not permitted during the CRP contract period unless the Secretary of Agriculture permits it for emergency purposes.

### **Where and When Do I Apply to Participate?**

CREP is on a continuous basis. Interested parties are encouraged to contact their local U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Centers or Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

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